



#### ***Temporal continuity in return migration in Australia 1976-2001***

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It has long been recognised that migration is a repetitive event that occurs multiple times over the life course. Despite its acknowledged significance, however, little is known about the temporal and spatial dynamics of chronic movement. This paper focuses on one aspect of repetitive movement – return migration. An improved understanding of this form of movement would enhance migration theory and has direct implications for policy. It also presents substantial methodological challenges. This paper aims to improve understanding of inter-regional return migration in Australia using transition data from the quinquennial Census. While most analyses of return migration have focused on returns to state or province of birth (eg Long 1988, Longino and Serow 1992), Australia, Canada and a small number of other countries collect data on place of residence at three points in time (at the Census, one year previously and five years previously) which provides a unique window on return moves over a shorter time span (Newbold and Bell 2001). This paper forms part of a project using these data to establish the patterns and processes of return migration in Australia over a 20 year period 1981-2001. It presents the first results from this analysis during the intercensal period 1996 to 2001. Using a migration matrix from the 2001 census the paper aims to

- Determine the extent or intensity of return migration in Australia;
- establish the pattern of return migration and its links to aggregate intercensal flows; and
- identify those segments of the population most prone to return migration.

Results reveal the complex spatial structure of the migration system and the extent to which return migration offsets the pattern of primary flows. They also demonstrate that return movement displays a distinctive age profile that differs radically from that of other migrations. We conclude by developing a series of detailed hypotheses for empirical testing using the full 1981-2001 dataset.